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ART IN LATIN AMERICA

BY JOHN BARRETT

DIRECTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL BUREAU OF AMERICAN REPUBLICS

THE great majority of people in the United States and in Europe, who are interested in the progress of art, have been so occupied with the consideration of this subject in its relation to the great northern world that they have not appreciated what is going on and being done in this respect throughout Latin America. In the twenty ambitious, resourceful, and potential republics, reaching from Mexico and Cuba south to Argentina and Chile, are numerous cities, communities, institutions, and organizations which probably have given even more attention to the development of art in all its phases than have the corresponding influences in the United States and in many of the European countries.

The Latin American himself, descended from the artistic Latins of southern

Europe, is more artistic in his nature than the average Anglo-Saxon or Teuton. His first thought, provided he has the means, is to make his particular environment attractive. Even if the exterior of his residence may seem forbidding, the interior generally reveals a desire to be surrounded with that construction or ornamentation which is pleasing and restful to the eye. When conditions have permitted exterior and outdoor beautification, there has been a corresponding attention to these matters. Perhaps more than any other race, the Latins have seemed to adapt their style of architecture to their surroundings, and although, in numerous instances, they have been obliged to contend with elements of nature which are antagonistic to beauty and harmony of construction, they have



BALUSTRADE OF THE BEIRA MAR AVENUE, RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

almost always effected some sort of compromise that reveals their artistic tendencies.

Even though the characteristic low, one-story, thick-walled house and building of the average small town or city of Latin America does not appear to the traveler especially beautiful or attractive, if he will compare it with the ramshackle, thrown-together, unbeautiful dwelling in the average small city and town of many sections of the United States, he will admit that the regularity of the former and its adaptation to its surroundings has much in it to be admired. If this same traveler or student will pass within the portals of these houses, which look forbidding on the outside, he will there find exquisite courtyards or patios, overhanging verandas, and open corridors decorated with old tiles, which will gratify his most artistic taste. Time and time again in my wanderings throughout Latin America I have come upon a low-storied adobe house that looked from the exterior as if it

were a hut or a hovel, but in passing within I have come upon an exquisite interior which immediately suggested comfort, rest, and refinement.

The narrow streets and the low houses found in the older Latin-American cities and towns resulted largely from the conditions of society as they existed long years ago when protection was required for the family and when comparatively little time was spent by people upon the streets. Now that society is better organized and government is being made stronger, there is a tendency to improve the cities with wider streets, an abundance of open parks, and the construction of higher buildings, although seldom if ever running to the abortive loftiness that ruins many American cities and towns. Every Latin-American municipality unfliningly has its central plaza, in which there is at least one statue or fountain, and, as the city grows, more plazas are constructed and more monuments are erected. The Latin-American municipality looks with horror upon the



PLAZA DE LA CONSTITUCION. MONTEVIDEO. URUGUAY

open place or common in an American city which has no statuary, no fountain, and often no artistic landscape development.

It is in the larger cities of our sister republics that we see the sway of artistic influence, even far beyond what is found in most of the cities of the United States. No one can visit the city of Mexico today without being greatly impressed with the effort being exerted to make it one of the beautiful cities of the world. Considering its population and its location, it is doing more in this direction than any city in North America, with possibly the exception of Washington, and it is doubtful if there appears even in Mexico City, with its large Indian population, half as many crudities in architecture as are to be seen in our National Capital. Certainly its avenues and streets are not being rendered strikingly unattractive by the rapid erection of sky-scrapers and all kinds of business structures such as are now being constructed along Washington's streets,

without any municipal control in the matter of taste and harmony with surroundings.

It would be a pleasure to take the American who is interested in the study of the progress of art, but who had never been to the south of us, on a journey which would include the city of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, Montevideo in Uruguay, Buenos Aires in Argentina, Santiago in Chile, and Lima in Peru. If this trip of inspection could also include Havana in Cuba, Caracas in Venezuela, Bogota in Colombia, La Paz in Bolivia, Quito in Ecuador, Asuncion in Paraguay, San José in Costa Rica, and Guatemala City in Guatemala, there would, in even the most remote of these places, be seen features of artistic development which would surprise the man who has not made previous investigations.

Perhaps the strongest impression to be gained would be that of progress in municipal art. It is really wonderful what Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires have accomplished in this direction. They



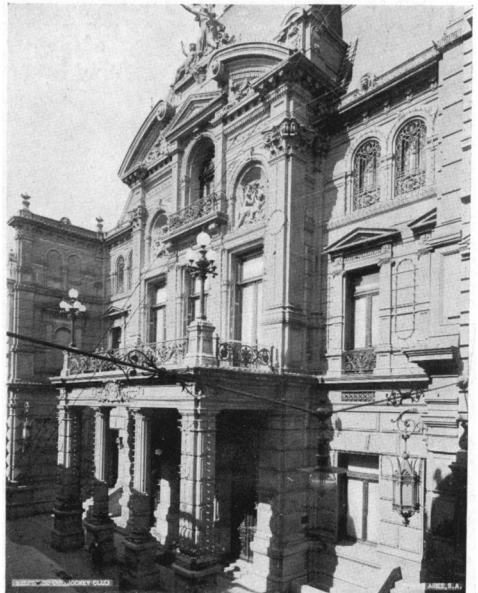
ARCH OF FEDERATION

CARACAS

have spent millions upon millions of dollars in laying out beautiful parks, wide boulevards and new avenues. They have expended corresponding sums in the construction of public buildings, in the erection of statues, and in other efforts at making the physical appearance of their cities pleasing, not only to the resident, but to the visitor. They have thought nothing of laying out broad avenues right through the very heart of a section which was built up solidly, in order that they might do away with narrow streets and have a magnificent approach to some central public structure or park. Even in the building of enormous docks and warehouses along their harbors and water-fronts they have studied the artistic side of their appearance. In none of these cities is it permissible to erect any kind of a residence or business structure unless it is approved by an art commission, which makes sure that it does not destroy the general effect. It would be absolutely impossible to erect upon the Avenida de Mayo of Buenos Aires many of the unattractive public and private structures which have gone up in the city of Wash-

ington. These great capitals of Latin America follow the example of Paris in this respect.

While the remoteness of the location of the Latin-American capitals and cities from the artistic centers of Europe, and from the routes of travel generally taken by Americans, keeps our people from being familiar with Latin-American achievement and education in art, the average home of the wealthy and refined Latin American is ornamented with paintings, portraits, etchings, and statuary groups which have either been made by home artists of no small skill, or have been purchased in Europe under the guidance of good critics. Of course, there are many exceptions to this rule, just as there are in the United States. Now and then there is a man who fills his residence with all kinds of ornamentation which shows that he, himself, does not possess the artistic temperament, but the average house of the refined Latin American shows a keen appreciation of what is really beautiful in art. The number of sculptors in proportion to the population is unusually large, and some wonderful works have been



JOCKEY CLUB

BUENOS AIRES



PLAZA DE LA INQUISICION Y ESTATUA DE SIMON BOLIVAR. LIMA, PERU

executed by these artists of Latin America. Although, again, as in the United States, there are statues and groups in Latin-American parks which are open to criticism, the quality is far above that to be seen in the average city of the United States. All the colleges and schools of Latin America have their painting, drawing, and architectural subdivisions, which are well patronized.

The great art dealers of Paris and other capitals of Europe report a healthy and continuous demand for the best things from their wealthy patrons of Latin America. This, of course, is not as extensive as that from the United States because this country is older in its material development and has a much larger proportion of wealthy men who can afford to make great purchases, but investigation would reveal a patronage of art on the part of the average well-to-do Latin American which is hardly equalled by the corresponding men of the United States. The number of Latin-American young men and young women to be found in the schools of art in Europe is very large.

In conclusion I will say just a word about art as it might affect the relations of North and South America. In the past we have approached our sister republics and peoples almost entirely along material lines. We have sought to make only commercial conquests, with the result that the average Latin American, with his inborn artistic sense, has looked upon the average North American as a hard-hearted business man with little finesse or artistic taste or thought. He has, therefore, considered that the people and surroundings of Europe would always be much more attractive and congenial to him. He has not realized what progress has been made in art throughout the United States, and he has not that respect for the work of American artists which he would have if there had been more contact along this line in the past. Any effort that can be made to develop an artistic relationship, as it were, between the United States and her sister nations through the organization of art clubs and societies, or by the coming together of the artists of North and South America, will have a direct effect

in bringing about a better understanding between us and the nations and peoples to the south of us. In this connection I might state that when Elihu Root made his famous journey in South America the Latin Americans gave him a great and cordial welcome, not merely as the Premier of the United States Cabinet, not merely as a leading statesman of this country, but as an eminent scholar, a profound lawyer, and a man of finesse of character and personality. In other words, they were attracted as much by what might correspond to the artistic side of his nature as they were by his power as a public man.

Whenever our artists and scholars have gone to Latin America, they have received a far greater reception than our business men and commercial representatives. A noticeable example of this was the remarkable attention which was

shown Archer M. Huntington when he made his notable visit to Buenos Aires in 1902. I do hope that the exhibitions of art which have been sent from the United States to the expositions at Buenos Aires in Argentina, and Santiago in Chile may help to draw the attention of the Latin Americans to the progress of art in the United States, and serve as a basis for the formation of closer relationships in the future.

In concluding this little article on "Art in Latin America" I wish it understood that it was hastily prepared in response to the earnest request of the editor of this publication, and that it pretends only to be a superficial and cursory glance at an important subject which, developed in detail, would, I am sure, awaken great interest in Latin America throughout the artistic circles of the United States and Europe.

CITY PLANNING

BY FREDERICK LAW OLMTED

Excerpts from an Introductory Address delivered at the Second National Conference on City Planning and Congestion of Population, held at Rochester, N. Y., May, 1910.

THE subject of City Planning is no recent development. But there are new features about the subject today. There is a growing appreciation of the profound influence which activities carried on in one part of the field and with a view to one set of purposes may have upon the conditions in another part of the field. There is a growing realization of such things as the influence of street plans and depths of block upon the type of building and thus upon the amount of light and air in the peoples' dwellings; such as the effect of railroad locations on the distribution of factories and on the congestion of population and character of housing; such as the effect of ordinances

devised to meet structural or sanitary requirements upon the comeliness of the city; and such as the interrelation of transportation systems and methods of taxation in their influence upon the kind of homes in which the people shall find that they can afford to live.

The complex unity, the appalling breadth and ramification, of real city planning, is being borne in upon us as never before. The ideal of city planning is one in which all these activities—all the plannings that shape each one of the fragments that go to make up the physical city shall be so harmonized as to reduce the conflict of purposes and the waste of constructive effort to a minimum, and thus secure for the people of